

48. LAND LEECHES

The following notes to Mr. Smythies' query about leeches may be of interest. I have never seen a leech drop from a tree. I have seen them in clusters of five or six on the underside of a single leaf between two and four feet from the ground waiting for their victims. As a man or animal passes he is apt to brush up against them when they fasten on to the clothing or body. They certainly do not rely on touch to be aware of their prey, but use some other sense. If you put your hand near a cluster on a leaf they will all stretch themselves out towards you. I cannot remember at what distance but, I think, your hand would have to be only a few inches away.

Prevention: Putties soaked in tobacco juice. The leech crawls into the folds of the putties and there is turned into rubber. Besides two pairs of thin socks a good plan we used for a stroll in the garden in Gangtok was to wear white socks and tuck white tennis trousers into them. In this way you or someone else could usually see a leech before he started work.

Treatment: Our Medical Officer, Dr. Dyer, gave me a very useful tip for dealing with a leech once he had got hold. First of all get him off with a pinch of salt but don't pull him off; then, to staunch the blood burn a piece of cotton wool the size of a golf ball, put a spot of iodine on the wound and put the cotton ash on. Pull up your sock or take some steps to keep the ash in place for a few minutes. The ash makes a kind of artificial scab which can be removed in your next bath.

I speak with some experience. I was once attacked in the Assam forests when in low condition and every bite festered. I bear the scars today. One night I took 150 (mostly those turned to rubber) off my clothes and one leg, it then got dark and I could not count the other leg!

Why do leeches not attack barking deer and other wild inhabitants of the jungle?

STIFFKEY,
NORFOLK,
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I was most interested in Miscellaneous Note No. 18 on Land Leeches by Mr. B. E. Smythies in Vol. 51, No. 4 of the *Journal*.

I have had 30 years experience of leech infested jungles in the South Indian hill ranges, including the Malanaad of Coorg and Mysore, the Nilgiris and Nilgiri-Wynaad, the Nelliampathi and Anamallai Hills, and the High Wavy Mountains in the Madurai District.

Many of the questions posed by Mr. Smythies have intrigued me. The following are some additional observations:—

Some 20 years ago, in the Anamallais, I did some small experiments on leeches with the help of our estate doctor. We dissected